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I Know Whom I Have Believed

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I Know Whom I Have Believed

Abstract

"If we read the promise to Timothy and of the Psalms in the context of Job, perhaps we can gain a new appreciation of even the smallest degree of the rich blessing that is in store for us."

Posting about the majesty of God from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<http://inallthings.org/i-know-whom-i-have-believed/>

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Donald Roth

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2017

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 8](#)

[Job 38:12-21](#)

[1 Timothy 1:12-14a](#)

"But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me. ¹³ Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁴ By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you." – [2 Timothy 1:12-14 \(ESV\)](#)

There are some Bible verses that I can't help but sing. I learned to read music sitting by my grandfather in church, and some songs from the old blue Psalter Hymnal have roots which tap directly into my soul in a way that overwrites the specific wording of whatever version of Scripture I'm reading with the melodic verse.

2 Timothy 1:12 is one of those verses. For those familiar with Daniel Whittle's famous hymn, I'm guessing your reaction is similar. Our lectionary selections today enrich that memory by reminding us of just who it is that we believe in and just what that "good deposit" that we hold on to entails.

Who we believe in

[Job 38:12-21](#) is an excerpt from God's response to Job and his friends. While these men are considering why God has visited such calamity on Job, the Lord rises up and speaks from a mighty whirlwind. If you've ever lived through a severe thunderstorm or tornado, you have some idea of how terrifying that must have been. Then, out of this terrible wind, the voice of God Himself breaks forth, and He is not pleased.

We tend today to focus on God's fatherly aspects in a way that can tame Him and make Him more accessible to us. Yet, while it is true that God is our Father, our emphasis can have the effect of reducing the majesty of who God really is. Job and his friends had been speaking of God in a bit of an abstract sense, in some cases presuming that God blessed obedience like a heavenly investment return, as if they rendered Him something that He needed by their works. They were imagining God on a smaller or more distant scale, but then the men were confronted by a small taste of God's true majesty.

The whole of Job 38-41 is a rich tapestry of imagery woven around a detailed account of God's power, provision, and majesty. In fact, the scope of God's providence is described in these chapters in a way that is so expansive, explicit, and meticulously detailed that you'd be hard-pressed to find a parallel elsewhere.

The context of this detailed account, then, should be informative. This is the Lord Himself asking two questions that we may have found ourselves asking at times in our lives: "Do you know who I am?" and "Who do you think you are?" If you can recall the outrage and emotion that may have led you to say such a thing before, try to imagine that on a Divine scale, and the realization should knock you over or send you running for cover.

Yet, while this exchange provokes Job to understandably throw himself at the mercy of an awesome God, I think we tend to read this as God confronting Job's sin in daring to question God. I think this interprets the passage too

strongly. If Job had “cursed God and died,” then the devil would have been proven right. The same would have been true if Job had spoken falsely about God.

Instead, God criticizes Job for speaking out of ignorance, losing hope that God had a plan for him, and questioning why God was afflicting him. More than perhaps anyone other than Christ, Job could cry out in the words of the Psalmist, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” If this was not a sinful cry on Christ’s lips, then it was not so for Job either.

I would read this instead as God giving Job a much-needed dose of perspective, not because Job was sinning (rejecting God), but in order to shake him out of his hopeless, myopic focus on his own narrow circumstances. If we share these same tendencies to make our God smaller and tamer than we ought, then these verses can serve as the same wake-up call to us.

What we are entrusted with

Taken in the context of this reminder of the scope of God’s majesty, [Psalm 8](#) reminds us of the incredible scope of the “good deposit” mentioned in 1 Timothy. Yes, that blessing most directly refers to the gospel message itself, but the message of reconciliation also entails a glorious promise of inheritance. Christ, by His faithful service, lived out the fullness of God’s plan for mankind to which Psalm 8 points. While God gave mankind dominion, only Christ proved genuinely worthy of His calling; yet, by virtue of His death, we too lay claim to His stockpile of glory and honor as part of our divine inheritance.

We typically focus on the glory of the cross and the great mystery of the fact that we—sinful, miniscule, and frail though we are—can be counted worthy partakers of the glory of Christ. This is fitting, but we need to also remind ourselves of the cosmic scope of that reconciliation. Just as God sets up the sun, moon, and stars in Genesis 1 to rule over the light, He installs mankind as lords of the living in Genesis 2. While all of creation is reconciled to Immanuel in [Revelation 21](#) (notice the explicit mention of there being no need for sun or moon), the sons and daughters of God continue to rule over creation (see [Rev. 22:5](#)). Today’s reading reminds us just what the scope of that promise really is.

If we read the promise to Timothy and of the Psalms in the context of Job, perhaps we can gain a new appreciation of even the smallest degree of the rich blessing that is in store for us. Then, this foretaste of glory can renew our souls to endure whatever pains or trials lay yet ahead, pressing on toward the goal, refreshing our confidence that “we know whom we have believed and are persuaded that He is able to keep that which we’ve committed unto Him against that day.”